

*House Committee on Education and Labor
Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities*

Hearing on “Examining Innovative Practices to Improve Child Nutrition”

*Opening Statement of Ranking Member Todd Russell Platts
October 8, 2009*

Good morning. Welcome to our hearing. Today we will explore innovative practices aimed at improving childhood nutrition.

Access to nutritional foods and a healthful diet is an important component in ensuring children receive the nutritional needs necessary to be successful at school and start the journey towards a more healthy adulthood. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that seventeen percent of children ages 2-19 are considered overweight. These overweight children are more likely to become overweight adults and have a greater risk of developing cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and certain cancers.

Several initiatives at both the local and federal level have taken significant steps in advancing the health of school children.

Improvements made to both the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs over the last several years have aimed at improving the nutritional well-being of students. While the School Lunch Program must meet applicable recommendations of the 1995 Dietary Guidelines, many schools are choosing to go beyond these recommendations. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the percentage of schools that offered a la carte items like vegetables and bean salads to students has increased twenty percent since 2000, with over seventy-two percent of schools offering these items. Over sixty-six percent of schools have chosen to trim fat from meat or use lean meat, up from 56 percent in 2000.

Additionally, the Child Nutrition and Women, Infants, and Children Reauthorization Act of 2004 required those schools participating in school lunch programs to develop comprehensive wellness policies. Local efforts have also improved, with over sixty-five percent of school districts providing funding for staff

development on nutrition and dietary behavior, an increase of over twenty percent since 2000.

Today, we will hear from Ms. Deborah Yargar-Reed, a Physical Education teacher at Biglerville Elementary School, in my Congressional District. Ms. Yargar-Reed will share with us experiences in her school, where she worked collaboratively with her colleagues, administrators, and local community members to increase nutrition and physical activity.

I look forward to hearing the testimony from our distinguished panel today. As we move toward the reauthorization of federal child nutrition programs, it is critically important that we continue to improve the nutrition and wellness of our children, while remaining vigilant of the impacts of new mandates on our local school districts. Thank you, Chairwoman McCarthy.